

Testimony of Shelly Heeringa (Mother of Jessica Heeringa) on HB 5189

November 12, 2014

My name is Shelly Heeringa, I'm here this morning to speak to you about how important passing bill no. 5189, Jessica's Law. Jessica is my daughter, her full name is Jessica Lynn Heeringa. On April 26th, 2013, my daughter was abducted from her place of employment, the Exxon Gas Station in Norton Shores, MI, between 10:54 pm and 11:07 pm, it has been a year and a half and counting since she was abducted, the police have very little information to go on due to the fact of the gas station not having any security cameras.

When I spoke to the owner of the gas station the next morning, he told me that he liked to hire young attractive woman because they brought in more business, and what did my daughter get in return, she had to work in an business, by herself with no security of any kind, I have no doubt in my mind if the owner would have had security cameras and another employee working, I would still have my daughter, my grandson, would still have his mother.

I know this may have happened even if the owner had security cameras, but with cameras so many questions as to her abduction would have been answered. Law Enforcement would have been able to see the abductor or abductors, they would have been able to maybe see a license plate no., how many were involved, how the abduction happened, and an actual description of the abductor, law enforcement would have been able to check previous days to see who was in the gas station, to see if she was being stalked.

I believe whoever did this, planned this abduction, watched the gas station, knew there was no cameras, knew that these women worked alone, and knew when the gas station was slow, and of course found the person he wanted.

No one grows up dreaming of being a gas station clerk, my daughter has dreams she wanted to be an accountant, she dreamed of being able to provide a better life for her son, she knew the gas station did not have security but with the economy being bad, jobs scarce, she choose to work there to support her son, I talked to her many times about how worried I was with her working there at night by herself, but like most twenty five years olds, she thought she could handle anything, she never thought of abduction but she did think of robberies and told me she would lock herself in the office and the robber could take what he wanted, unfortunately what this person/people wanted was my daughter.

Jessica should have never had to make a choice between providing for her son or her own safety, the owner of this business did not even care what happened to my daughter, in his eyes she was expendable, so much so he placed an ad to replace her the next day.

To her family, her friends, and especially her little boy it has been a never ending nightmare, the thought of what my daughter has had to endure this past year and a half or looking into my grandson's eyes when he tells me how much he misses his momma rips your heart out on a daily basis. If the gas station had cameras I believe it would have been days not months and my daughter would have been found and returned to us. If the gas station would have had cameras and another employee, I believe she never would have been abducted.

Please pass this bill, it won't help my daughter but it will ensure the safety of anyone else who works in a convenience store or gas station, no one is expendable, no matter what you do for a living everyone deserves and should expect to have a safe working environment, no family should have to endure what mine has, no person should have to endure what my daughter, Jessica is enduring. I know having security cameras and another employee will not stop all abductions or robberies, but it will make the criminal think twice and when it does happen it will give law enforcement the information needed to find the person abducted and arrest the criminals. The last thing I would like everyone to think about is whoever abducted my daughter is still out there and could be looking for their next victim.

Thank you